

# **i don't pay attention to the world ending (it has ended for me many times and started again in the morning)**

**by milfbymers**

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**Summary:**

“So, when did these... ‘episodes’ start?”

“I can’t really remember... maybe January of last year? Maybe a little the year before that?” Her therapist nodded and wrote it down at the top of the notepad that was sitting in her lap.

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joyce tries going to therapy

# **i don't pay attention to the world ending (it has ended for me many times and started again in the morning)**

## **Author's Note:**

warnings for self harm, panic attacks and self destructive behavior. title is a quote from my 'maybe i'm crazy' board on pinterest.

for anya, because i love you and i love this joyce

“So, when did these... ‘episodes’ start?”

Joyce’s therapist, Carolyn, leaned back in her chair, a pencil stuck in between her index finger and her thumb. She was sitting with her legs crossed and she was in a cardigan, despite it being 85 degrees outside. Joyce was sitting opposite of her on a couch that was too stiff to relax on. She was chewing on her bottom lip.

“I can’t really remember... maybe January of last year? Maybe a little the year before that?” Her therapist nodded and wrote it down at the top of the notepad that was sitting in her lap.

Joyce had only been seeing her for a few months. The topic was brought up after they had moved out of Hawkins. Jonathan had asked her about it one night after dinner, he had sat down in the chair across from her in the living room. “Mom?” His voice was gentle, cautious. It had almost reminded Joyce of the way he spoke to Lonnie when he was young. She tried not to feel guilty about it.

Jonathan’s hands were folded in his lap, he was reluctant to meet Joyce’s eyes. “Yeah?” She smiled at him. It took him a minute to respond, he kept taking in a breath like he was about to ask the question but closed it immediately after. The silence building between them was starting to make her hands shake.

“What do you think about uh- about going to therapy?” The question was too heavy for a son to be asking his mother and she knew it. Joyce became overwhelmed with the urge to take her oldest son into her arms when he asked. To whisper apologies for making him grow

up too fast, for refusing to take care of herself so her son had to do it for her. But she just clenched a fist and dug her nails into her palm instead.

“I’ve thought-” She started but the lie fell short before it had the chance to fully leave her mouth. Joyce knew she had never thought about it. She toyed with the idea when she had to drop Will off for his appointments but never had the courage to ask the receptionist to book her own.

He raised his eyebrows at her half spoken lie and sighed. “Maybe it’s time to do a little more than think about it?” Despite the frustration in his eyes, his tone was soft. Joyce felt her shoulders slouch. “Alright, okay, I’ll ask about it when I take Will tomorrow.” At her agreement, Jonathan’s eyes lit up, “Thank you.”

Since that night, her appointments were every Thursday at noon. Joyce would get up on Thursdays at an earlier time than normal, her anxiety for the upcoming appointment took what little comfort she could manage to help herself stay asleep. She had a cup of coffee while standing at the kitchen counter. She made the kids breakfast, pancakes and bacon, it was the same every week. Then, she went to get ready, even if it was hours before she needed to.

The hard part was sticking to the cover stories, struggling to remember the wrong details instead of accidentally confessing the right ones. Joyce practiced them in the mirror before her sessions and on days where she couldn’t bear to look at herself, she said them in the car around her cigarette. In 1983, Will had just simply run away from home, just a young kid wanting to play a prank on his mom and brother. But, the prank had gone out of hand, Will had run into the wrong people. The town desperately searched for him until the local police found him curled up in the woods behind Joyce’s house with serious injuries.

And in November 1984, the couple had planned a camping trip (“The weather was unusually warm” Joyce would say with practiced ease. Carolyn didn’t seem to care). One where it could be all of them; Hopper, Joyce, Bob and the kids. Bob was suspicious of the area but the group wasn’t paying attention to his warnings (she hated this part, she would’ve paid attention, she couldn’t afford not to. Not

anymore) and it led to an attack right before they were going to go to bed.

“And these episodes are triggered by what happened that night in November, yes?” Carolyn’s voice startled her. Joyce let out a quiet apology whispered under her breath when she jumped at the sound that she knew the other woman would disapprove of. She nodded in response, “Some of them, yes”

Her arm was tucked across her torso, her hand was resting against the front of her shoulder, she avoided making eye contact. The panic was setting in her chest, a familiar friend that wasn’t very kind. Joyce took in a deep breath, it was one unstable and unable to fill her lungs.

Carolyn’s eyes were not warm, they were not understanding. Joyce didn’t know how to voice the tightness she felt in her chest to someone who didn’t really know what she was talking about. Someone who didn’t know their patient was lying, just that she could hardly manage to talk.

“Are you able to talk about that night from last year? Maybe we can get to the root of what’s causing these moments if you can open up.” Joyce stiffened. “I don’t really- I can’t remember much...” She trailed off, the embarrassment of forgetting the details of her boyfriend’s death that she knew was her fault lingered between her and Carolyn.

She ignored the shaking of Joyce’s hands and cleared her throat, “Tell me what you do remember, Joyce. You have to start somewhere to be able to work through it.” Joyce stiffened at the harsh tone. She didn’t react well to talking about her feelings in such tense circumstances. She craved warmth, soft spoken questions that weren’t heavy with sympathy. Her heart ached for genuine curiosity, people who wouldn’t look at her differently after she told them about what goes on in her head. Joyce yearned for kind understanding.

“Can we maybe talk about something else?” She pleaded, already disgusted with the look of desperation she knew her eyes were filled with. Joyce could feel the pout on the corners of her mouth; she bit her lip until it bled.

Carolyn sighed and started writing on the notepad. Joyce let out a breath she didn't realize she was still holding during her plea. She fantasized about being back in bed, she itched to light a cigarette. That was another thing she hated about her therapist, she had a strict "no cigarette" policy. It was on a neat little sign next to her door with a smiley face underneath it. She thought about scribbling over it with a Sharpie one day.

Joyce wanted to crawl out of her skin. Her clothes were sitting wrong, the fabric was pulling in the wrong places and uneven in others. Carolyn wouldn't stop writing more notes. She pulled her bottom lip back in between her teeth, it was sore, the metallic taste from earlier still lingered.

The state had only agreed to pay for a certain amount of sessions. All of Will's were fully covered but she was limited to 20. She knew she had to start talking if she wanted to make any progress. But this therapy wasn't going to help her heal, not to the full extent. Joyce wasn't allowed to talk about what really happened, instead she was given some cheap cover stories scribbled on a piece of paper that she had to sign. That's what Carolyn was treating her for, not for the monster that fell out of her refrigerator or the way she felt holding Will's limp body in her arms. Not for the way she had to tie her own child up in her backyard shed or the way she shakes when the phone rings. Not for the way she can't comfort her screaming child out of a nightmare because she can't help but remember the bruising on her neck or the way she has to turn the lights off the 'right' amount, how she has to lay the blanket on the bed the right way before something crawls out of the walls and takes her instead.

With a shaky tone, she started talking "I can remember screaming, my throat was sore afterwards." Carolyn's mouth lifted on one side, a tiny resemblance of a smile. It made Joyce want to keep talking. But the fear was setting in again. Her anxiety was faster that time, unable to be stopped before it settled in the stretch of her hands and the ache of her shoulders.

Her clothes still weren't sitting right, it was getting even worse. But the more she pulled, the more uneven it was. It was impossible to get it just right. She was struggling to catch a full breath that filled her lungs. The more she was showing symptoms, the more embarrassed

Joyce became. The embarrassment led to anger. She needed a distraction, needed to calm down before Carolyn tried to admit her to a hospital she couldn't afford. Joyce looked over at her, Carolyn had finally stopped fucking writing.

"Joyce? Are you- What's happening?" Joyce covered her face, desperate to find somewhere to hide where Carolyn couldn't see her. It was too vulnerable, it wasn't how she wanted it to go. The session wasn't productive, it was moving her backwards. Joyce was never going to be able open up, she was never going to heal, not even if she told Carolyn every gory and nauseating detail of what really happened. It would always be poisoning her for the rest of her life.

"I just- I need some air is all, I'll be right back" She could barely even recognize her own voice, it sat weirdly on her tongue and sounded far away. Her body was becoming a stranger, it was present but she was not. It was hard to feel the ground underneath her feet, she couldn't feel the weight of the purse on her arm.

The wind bit at her nose and ears as soon as she opened the building door. Joyce pressed her back against the wall, the brick was leaving scratches against the back of her arms. At least she knew she could feel something again. She took deep breaths, her lungs were finally able to hold what she was giving them. She checked the watch on her arm, it read 12:40. The appointment still had another 20 minutes.

With a lit cigarette between her lips, Joyce started walking towards her car. She could try again next week. The thought of the disapproval on Carolyn's face was too much for Joyce to think about. Maybe she would give up therapy, mentioning to Jonathan that it helped and she really did feel better (while hoping he didn't hear her screaming Bob's name during an episode).

Joyce turned the key in the ignition. Her hands were still shaking so hard that it was difficult to light another cigarette. But, she managed. It was 12:45 when she pulled out of the parking lot.

### **Author's Note:**

me, trying to explain that i don't project on joyce  
byers in a "this character needs to fit all my mental

illnesses bc im insane" way but in a "the headcanons for this character make sense even if they could be seen as a projection of some of my mental illnesses because her and i were already the same" sorta way.

but if u read this, this is canon. fuck the duffers. <33  
she is mine

im palmvioletstan on twitter if u want to listen to me  
scream about joyce for 12 hours a day